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Randunu Paralaya: The battle between Rāvaṇa and Viṣṇu

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ආර්ය යුගයේ සිට ම ශ්‍රී ලංකාවේ ජනයා ලේඛනයට පුරුදු වී සිටියහ. මහින්දාගමනයත් සමග ම ලේඛන සම්ප්‍රදාය වඩාත් ප්‍රබල ලෙස ව්‍යාප්ත විය. වාචනා මාර්ගයෙන් ගෙන එන ලද ත්‍රිපිටකය හා තදාශ්‍රිත අටුවාවන් ද ලංකාවේ දී ග්‍රන්ථාරූඪ වීම ලේඛන සම්ප්‍රදායේ ප්‍රබල සංදිස්ථානයක් වේ. සිංහල සාහිත්‍ය සම්ප්‍රදායේ මුල් ම කාලවකවානුව වූ අනුරාධපුර යුගයේ දී සාහිත්‍ය සම්ප්‍රදාය සඳහා පෙදෙන් බුදු සිරිතද වැනි සංකල්පයන්ගේ දැඩි බල පෑමක් ඇති විය. කෙසේ නමුත් අනුරාධපුර යුගයේ සිට පැවති සාහිත්‍ය සම්ප්‍රදාය, සමාජ රූචිය සහ දෘෂ්ටිය කෝට්ටේ යුගයේ දී ප්‍රබල පරිවර්තනයකට ලක් විය. රටේ අභ්‍යන්තරයෙහි පැවැති දේශපාලන වෙනස්වීම් හා පිටස්තර ජාතීන් තුනකගේ බලපෑමකට ලංකාව ලක්වීම මේ සඳහා ප්‍රබල හේතූන් සේ පෙනේ. සීතාවක කාල වකවානුවේ දී දැඩි ශාසනික විලෝපන ක්‍රියාවන් සිදු වූ අතර සංකඩගල මුල් යුගයේ දී ප්‍රමාණවත් තරම් බුදු දහමේ හා සාහිත්‍යයේ ව්‍යාප්තිය සඳහා රාජ්‍ය අනුග්‍රහය නොලැබිණි. ඒ සමග ම දකුණු ඉන්දියානු ජන සමාජය ද විවිධ අයුරින් ලාංකේය සමාජයට බලපාන්න විය. මේ පසුබිම මත දේව වන්දනයට ද දැඩි ඉඩ කඩක් ලැබිණි. විවිධ සම්ප්‍රදායේ ජන සාහිත්‍යයක් ද ගොඩ නැගිණි. මහා සම්ප්‍රදායකට වඩා වූල සම්ප්‍රදායේ සාහිත්‍ය නිර්මාණ බිහි වූ අතර ඒවා පොදු ජනයා අතර ද ජනප්‍රිය විය. මේ අතර ලංකාවේ පමණක් නොව භාරතීය සමාජයෙහි පවා දැඩි කතා බහට ලක් වූ ආධ්‍යානයකී රාම සීතා වෘතාන්තය . ඒ ආශ්‍රිත විවිධ නිර්මාණ ද බිහි ඇත. රාම සීතා රාවණ කතා පුවත ලංකා සමාජයට

සමීප වුවකි. කෙසේ නමුත් විවිධ තේමාවන් යටතේ නිර්මාණය වූ විවිධ කෘතීන් 19වන සියවසේ මුද්‍රණ ශිල්පයේ ව්‍යාප්තියත් සමඟ ලාංකේය පාඨක සමාජය අතර ප්‍රබල අන්දමින් ව්‍යාප්ත විය. රන්දුනු පරලය නැමැති කුඩා ආබ්‍යානය යනු රාම සීතා යන සාම්ප්‍රදායික කතා පුවතට විෂ්ණු ද සම්බන්ධ කර ගනිමින් , ශාන්ති කර්මයක ස්වරූපයකින් ලියන ලද කුඩා පුස්තිකාවකි. කොළඹ කෞතුකාගාර පුස්තකාලයේ දී මෙම මූලාශ්‍රය යොයාගත් අතර තදාශ්‍රිත මූලාශ්‍රය භාවිත කරමින් මෙය විග්‍රහයට ලක් කර ඇත.

Keywords: Rāma, Rāvaṇa, Viṣṇu ,Sītā,, Randunu Paralaya

1. Rāmāyaṇaya and associated Sinhalese literature

Vālmiki and his colleagues, who lived between 400 and 200 BC, are evidently the legitimate authors of Rāmāyaṇaya , the royal epic (Keith 1965: 58– 59) . A legendary account of a battle between Rāma and Rāvaṇa (taken place before the arrival of King Vijaya) is referred to in Rāmāyaṇaya . This battle had lasted 12 years. Rāma was compelled to stay within a camp's confines for ten years without being able to reach Sri Lanka. Eventually, Rāma emerged victorious as Vibhīṣaṇa, the brother of the demon king named Rāvaṇa, joined the ranks. The folk belief has it that Rāvaṇa exhibited many skills through the power of his mystic knowledge.

Several scholars have authored books on Vālmiki's Rāmāyaṇaya of the world literature (Silva 1961: Preface). Evidence is available to support the association of Sinhalese authors with Sanskrit epics since Anuradhapura period, though no interest had been shown in translating Rāmāyaṇaya or any other Sanskrit works into Sinhalese. (But Dandin's Kavyadarasha was translated into Sinhala as Siyabasakara in Anuradhapura period) A custom of authoring Sinhalese works influenced by Sanskrit literature was evident until the Kotte period but no single Sanskrit work was translated (Sannasgala 1961:557). However, Sanskrit literature seems to have had a heavy impact on Sinhalese literature in terms of content and form (Wijeyawardana 1968:134). Although it is convenient to deduce that Indian epics such as mahā bhārata and Rāmāyaṇaya germinated Sinhalese poets, no single book based on the epics was published until the 17th century (Godakumbura 1996:1978). However, in c Sinhala classical poetry literature of the 16th century, ample information on Rāmāyaṇaya is found (Wickramasinghe (1991: 18). This information originates from kāvyaśekharaya girā sandeśaya as well as girā sandeśaya authored during the Kotte period. In addition to the allusion of Rāmāyaṇaya and mahā bhārata the parrot of girā sandeśaya residing in a rest-house (Ambalama) in Welitota hears the chatter of the people at night. He hears how the people narrate the Rāma Sītā story as well.

Ayĕk misadiṭu	gat
nōyĕk kavnaḷu ræugat	rævgat
pera	tamatamanugat
Rāma Sītā katā	tĕpalata

(girā sandeśaya 1951: 114)

Folklore associated with the establishment of Sithavaka kingdom offers easy access to details about kulantīnu haṭana . Therefore it is clear that the Rāma Sītā legend existed in folklore until the Seethawaka phase of the Kotte period.

In the aftermath of the Kotte kingdom, literature as well as social appetite transformed to a certain extent. The South Indian connection was a pivotal phenomenon with the import of scholarly works (Kariyawasam 1990: 17) Ritualistic magic, angampora (a form of martial art unique to Sri Lanka) and polytheism are noted elements. As a result, shanthikarma (ceremonial rituals) associated with deities unique to the Sri Lankan setting came to stay (Karunaratne 1991: 80).

2. Randunu Paralaya

The first two decades of the 19th century marked the emergence of several missionaries to propagate Christianity (Murdoch 17). The print industry flourished with their missionary work. By 1880, several poetry books came to be published in printing presses in Galle, Matara and Colombo (Kariyawasam 1973: 422). Small letters emerged to replace the epic tradition. Tiny poetry collections based on everyday life events and the beginning of a poetry tradition against the conventional style was quite evident at the time (Kariyawasam 1973: 456). A contemporary style emerged as against the intellectual linguistic tradition applied in the Sanskrit poetry works. The flexible use of language proved more efficient in paving the way for modern literature (Karunaratne 1991: 80). A large number of poetry narratives came to be published during the final phase of the 19th century. This phenomenon seems to have stemmed from the readers' interest in reading stories in newspapers. Among these poetry works, Jataka tales, as well as stories based on Tamil literature, could also be visible (Sarachchandra 1997: 27). The everyday events, as well as poetic works based on folklore, are also among them (Kariyawasam 1973: 488). Specifically, kaḷu yak pāliya, abiman yak pāliya, hat aḍi upata, randunu paralaya, kalaḷiḷi śāntiya, daḷumura upata, oṭunu mālaya, maḷayak upata outside Buddhism yet inside folk literature seem to have been in use among the contemporary masses. Although the Buddha's teachings shun these practices, they took in a Buddhist form (Sannasgala 1962: 704). Many ancient ceremonial rituals unrelated to their contemporary counterpart are evident according to British Civil Servant Hugh Neville who collected them and took them to London as an ola book collection (Kariyawasam 2002: 101). The poetry collection, Randunu (Ran Dunu) Paralaya, was also published during this period (Venerable Vajiragnana Thera 1992: 339).

It can be surmised that Randunu Paralaya and the ritual books on demons' heroic activities were written during the Kandyan period or a later period by certain lesser-known poets. Whoever the author of this book is, he intended to do away with Rāma and highlight the battle as one occurred between Rāvaṇa and Viṣṇu presenting it with heightened polytheism and ceremonial ritual connection. Presenting the work in the ceremonial ritual model, the poet has made use of the performance methodology to destroy the demons in the thovil (devil dance) ceremony customarily performed in the country. The very definition of Randunu Paralaya also appears to be the destruction of the demons by a golden bow or demolishing them. This story where Viṣṇu has defeated Rāvaṇa by the golden arrow and won the war is presented as a ceremonial ritual related to polytheist narrative. Every ceremonial ritual based on polytheist belief has a mythological narrative. The common feature of those mythological narratives is that they are based on a religious background (The Encyclopedia Britannica, 715). The religious background of the Ravana-Vishnu mythology is the legendary mythical narrative about God Vishnu in folklore. This mythical legend is vital as God Vishnu is related to the narrative.

3. The concept of God Viṣṇu

Although it is impossible to conclude that God Viṣṇu was originated in the Vedic era, the most ancient records about the god are found in Vedic works. Though the concept of Viṣṇu is quite important in the post-Hindu era, it does not sustain that importance in Vedic works. Among gods such as Indra and Varuṇa in Rigveda, Viṣṇu is positioned in a lower realm. However, there itself it is said that no one can get even closer to the greatness of Viṣṇu (Rigveda Sanhitha 1993: 59 1-2). Although Viṣṇu was treated at a base level in Vedic works, the works published later had given importance to Viṣṇu. About 18 works authored by Vyasa have given viṣṇu purāṇaya Vishnu importance. According to details therein, Viṣṇu is considered the greatest god (Wilson 1961: 108). Many ancient works including Sanskrit literary works have given various names to God Viṣṇu. Mahā mahā bhārataya Mahabharatha maintains that Viṣṇu is called by 1000 names (Mahabharatha 1966 xiii.i49). Viṣṇu is considered the most ideal soul and being (Wilson 02). The origin, as well as the existence of the universe, is manifested by God Viṣṇu. (Winternitz, 1977: 162).

4. Ten-fold avatar

The Ten-fold avatar is a concept related to God Viṣṇu. Descending from zenith to nadir is an avatar (Sanskrit English Dictionary, 1992: 162). To be in the human or animal form in order to eliminate the evil of the world defines the avatar concept (Encyclopedia of Buddhism 1961: 162). The avatar concept is found first in Bhagavad Gita. Viṣṇu appears in the world from period to period to protect noble men and eliminate evil men and establish Dhamma, hence paves the way to the establishment of avatar concept (Bhagavad Geetha iv 8)

paritrāṇāya sādhanām - vināśāya ca duṣkṛtama
dharma samsthāpanārthāya - sambhavāmi yuge yugē

This concept is referred to in Rigveda too (Rigvedavii 100, v-6). Later, the avatar concept is found in Mahayana teachings as well (Encyclopaedia of Buddhism, 1961: 162). Viṣṇu has 10 common avatars (Bhagavad Githa 3.95): (Use one method - Gita, Geetha, Githa.) Matsan, Kuruma, Varaha, Narasimha, Vamana, Parashurama, Rama, Krushna, Buddha and Kalki.

5. Rāma Avatar

Rāma, the son of King Daśaratha , is the complete human avatar of god Viṣṇu (Rao Gopinatha, 1984, 119). It is mentioned that Rāma appeared in the world to avoid demon Rāvaṇa's harm done to gods and men. The story since birth of Rāma and the ascendancy into the heavens is mentioned in the epic Rāmāyaṇa . Rāma's noble character, righteousness and warrior qualities coupled with Princess Seetha's chastity and the life-like protection of the husband is much appreciated here.

6. Viṣṇu as portrayed in Sinhalese folk literature

As Viṣṇu rises above Śhiva in postmodern ancient works, the priority is given to Viṣṇu in folklore. The ceremonial rituals, in Sinhalese folk culture, are conducted for visible and invisible beings to maintain the physical welfare of a particular person. The priority given to God Viṣṇu is evident (Sarachchandra 1968). The Buddha has entrusted the mission of protecting Sri Lanka from Sakka to someone in the guise of god Viṣṇu (Mahavamsa 1967: 7 ch 3-5 stanzas). This is also found in Deepavamsa, 1959: 25 25 verses).

The basic records on God God Viṣṇu in Sri Lankan culture are found in the latter phase of Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa periods. This is apparent even in the Chola period.

A large number of Śhaiva and Vaishnava devalas were built in Lanka during the contemporary period. It attracted a dynamic state sponsorship during the Polonnaruwa period. The remains of the Hindu pantheon, Nataraja, Parvathi, Karthikeya, Viṣṇu, Lakshmi, Bala Krushna and Shiva epitomises the God Vishnu concept in Sri Lanka (Lanka Itihasaya, 11 Volume 393 - 395 pp). The rituals which are seemingly ceremonial rituals performed for the favour of personal and social welfare such as devol madu, gammadu , pūna madu and mal madu the rituals - before the ritual begins the adventurous nature of the God Viṣṇu is much appreciated in the invitation recital for the gods to descend from the heavenly flowerbeds.

Silappadikāram narrates that Pattini cursed the country as well as the king because her husband was killed unjustly. Pattini is the primary local goddess among Sinhalese Buddhists

(Jayawardana 1985: 130). The Gammadu ritual mainly stems from this source (Kariyawasam 1990: 14). The kālāpandam ritual is also linked to God Viṣṇu especially in the pei veema (observation of higher precept) occasion. Among the ceremonial rituals, the Bali yāgaya function reveres God Vishnu among others. The main theme of this ceremonial ritual is to alleviate diseases stemming from the planetary movement (Sedaraman 1967: 53).

The details of God Viṣṇu in the ceremonial ritual named Kohoṃbā Kankāri are visible in publications related to the birth story of Seetha (Disanayaka 1988:). The faith in God Viṣṇu became popular among the Buddhists because of the belief that both Viṣṇu and Upulvan are one god. At least 10 names used for God Upulvan are found in Upulvan Asna written in the Vṛtta Gandhi Saili metre (Dharmadasa (1994: 413). Upulvan is a god of the pre-Buddhist era. Nilvan (bluish) god is the definition. Vishnu's colour is also lotus blue. Both Vishnu and Upulvan are considered one god. Senarat Paranavithana claims that Upulvan is God Varuṇa of the ancient Indu Ariyans (Paranavithana 1953: 169). However, Munidasa Cumaratunga opines that Upulvan is a god with local origins (Cumaratunga 1962: 40). Hindus claim that the Buddha is an avatar of God Viṣṇu. However, Buddhists consider that Viṣṇu is a Bodhisatva who will be a future Buddha. The mythology related to this noble god is portrayed on the Viṣṇu Deva Kannalavva (invocation) that narrates two battles won by Viṣṇu. They are the Asura battle and Rāvaṇa battle. Hindu mythology relates that the Suras (deities) won the battle against the asuras (demons) because Viṣṇu drank ambrosia after squashing the ocean. God Viṣṇu of the Suras won the Rāvaṇa battle as he destroyed Rāvaṇa and his demon crowd by his golden arrow according to the Sinhala Buddhist theological literature (Amarasekara 1962: 40). Ancient devil dance verses relate the adventures of God Vishnu and the power of the golden arrow. The following poem is a classic example.

āla vaḍana ruvan dunna paṇiviḍa kara	lā
dālavare ran dunne ḷḷiya balā	lā
nīla varṇa deva ruvin ginijal dī	lā
kola nāetiva viṣṇu mē mal yahanaṭa vāḍa	lā

kirula ḷḷeran deva baraṇa nīla saḷuva æ	da
suruḷu ḷḷeran dunu daḍu siri haste tada tē	da
suruḷu indra miṇi jālā mal paṭi sura tē	da
kuruḷu asna pāena nāgilā vaḍin viṣṇu tē	da

(Sumanapala 1995: 133)

In the presentation of the Rāvaṇa -Vishnu battle story in Ran Dunu Paralaya, the supremacy of Vishnu's golden arrow appears to be the point of inspiration. Moreover, the belief in deities and related rituals established in India remains an influential factor as

well. The narrative about Rama, Rāvaṇa and Seetha is such a well-grounded story in India. The popular narratives in India have influenced our culture since the ancient according to Nandadeva Wijesekara. He cites the Rama- Seetha story as an example. The Anjanam performance (light-reading) indicates the extent to which it has influenced our country. In Anjanam, an ointment is applied to a saucer which is placed on a coconut oil lamp for oracle. The oracle is shown by Hanuma (monkey god) and Anjanam goddess. It is Seetha who is shown as anjanam goddess. Hanuma walks across the saucer with a fire torch recalling the monkey god with tail on fire. This shows how the Rama- Seetha mythological narrative is related to our god beliefs and rituals such as anjanam .

Upon inquiring poetry from beginning to the end, Randunu Paralaya indicates its performance presentation of Rāvaṇa and Vishnu. First, the birth of Vishnu is presented the way the birth stories of deities related to devil dances are narrated. Rāma is mentioned at first. Later, the poet uses only Vishnu's name (Randunu Paralaya verses 5 and 6). The traditional Rāma Rāvaṇa and Sītā narrative relates the Rāma Rāvaṇa and battle followed by the latter's abduction of Rama's wife, Seetha . However, it is altogether a different narrative in Randunu Paralaya. Angered by the records that the Buddha had given the mandate to God Vishnu to alleviate the troubles faced by a human, Rāvaṇa brought 1000 golden bows, suitable arrows and a golden sword. Donned in blue costumes flanked by demons, he enters the battle with Vishnu . Here the poet employs anachronism and places the Buddha's life before the and Rāma and Rāvaṇa era.

muniraja sit karuṇā karavā	lā
hanikaṭa pulvan dēvidu tēla	lā
naranaṭa van uḍa durudura hæra	lā
deviṇḍuṭa naralova bārava dī	lā
mēpuvat dænagēna tēda visirāva	na
ropasin kipemin uraṇavemin pæ	na
apaṭat væḍi devi kavuruda kiyami	na
særasēn yudayaṭa ēnnaṭa rāva	na
dasa dahasak tada randunu ærage	na
visidahasak særa ī daḍu ærage	na
ekasiya aṭak aggiṇi særa æraga	na
eran kaḍut vembu da særa æraga	na

diva abaraṇa diva oṭunu darā ga na
gavura nīladiya vastrā paladi na
ovuva sāmasæra guvanin sarosi na
kivuva viṣṇu paradi vi avi tis dena na

(Randunu Paralaya 20, 21, 22, 23 verses))

Seeing the approach of Rāvaṇa, Vishnu initiates a war with the golden bow in the left hand and the golden arrow in the right hand. As there are no separate battle scenes in the performance, this seems more drama-like than a battle of destroying the demons. The performance reaches an end with Vishnu acquiring the victory. A major portion of this work is allocated to the protection prayers to eliminate miscellaneous evil through the blessings of the golden arrow. It goes without saying that the poet yearns to aspire the blessings on the miscellaneous evils happening throughout the seven days.

Although no significant difference is observed on the basic contents of Randunu Parale and Randunu Paralya ola leaf books, an occurrence absent in Randunu Paralaya is observed. It is the fact that Rāma destroyed demons with the blessings of God Saman (Randunu Parale AR/10, CC/14 National Museum, Colombo). The basic feature of every book titled Randunu Paralaya encompasses the blessings based on golden arrow used by God Vishnu to destroy Rāvaṇa and his demon crowd. It can be inferred that these books could have been influencing the growth of the folk belief based on God Vishnu's golden arrow.

7. Conclusion

The narrative about Rāvaṇa and Vishnu is a certain mythical story found in the poetic work, Randunu Paralaya. Myth, in this respect, means something that happened in the past. It could be any story about gods, demons or heroes. The god in the Rāvaṇa – Vishnu narrative is Vishnu. The demon is Rāvaṇa. It is the common belief that these invisible persons are still alive with immense power. In this backdrop, the reference to Rāvaṇa bears a significant difference as against the narrative about Rāma, Rāvaṇa and Sītā. The objective here is to bless the common people with the might of God Vishnu's golden arrow used in the battle that took place between Vishnu and Rāvaṇa.

It is possible to gain an understanding of the nature of the cultural man's thinking of the 19th century as they approach the modern world.

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